

§ 116C-4. First in America Innovative Education Initiatives Act.

(a) The General Assembly strongly endorses the Governor's goal of making North Carolina's system of education first in America by 2010. With that as the goal, the Education Cabinet shall set as a priority cooperative efforts between secondary schools and institutions of higher education so as to reduce the high school dropout rate, increase high school and college graduation rates, decrease the need for remediation in institutions of higher education, and raise certificate, associate, and bachelor degree completion rates. The Cabinet shall identify and support efforts that achieve the following purposes:

- (1) Support cooperative innovative high school programs developed under Part 9 of Article 16 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes.
- (2) Improve high school completion rates and reduce high school dropout rates.
- (3) Close the achievement gap.
- (4) Create redesigned middle schools or high schools.
- (5) Provide flexible, customized programs of learning for high school students who would benefit from accelerated, higher level coursework or early graduation.
- (6) Establish high quality alternative learning programs.
- (7) Establish a virtual high school.
- (8) Implement other innovative education initiatives designed to advance the State's system of education.

(b) The Education Cabinet shall identify federal, State, and local funds that may be used to support these initiatives. In addition, the Cabinet is strongly encouraged to pursue private funds that could be used to support these initiatives.

(c) The Cabinet shall report by January 15, 2004, and annually thereafter, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on its activities under this section. The annual reports may include recommendations for statutory changes needed to support cooperative innovative initiatives, including programs approved under Part 9 of Article 16 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes. (2003-277, s. 1.)